

TAKING STOCK AFTER GENEVA

THE two articles here published may do something to brace minds disappointed in the results of the Genevan conference of foreign ministers. The point they make, one concretely and the other more theoretically, is not that we should have known better all along, but that the East-West division of the world is deep and real and needs a more complex, energetic, and persistent statecraft than we are perhaps ever

willing to admit, to keep it within bounds. G. F. HUDSON, a frequent contributor, is now director of the Center for Far Eastern Studies of St. Antony's College in Oxford, England. PAUL KECSKEMETI, also well known to our readers, is a philosopher and social scientist on the staff of the Rand research organization. He is the author of *Meaning, Communication, and Value* (1952).

What Is the Iron Curtain For?

G. F. HUDSON

IN OCTOBER of this year London was visited by the "Classic Theater of the People's Republic of China." Despite certain adaptations to the tastes of a Western audience, the company provided a fine representation of the traditional dramatic art of China in dance and mime, and won very favorable comments from the critics. To such a cultural exhibition the unwary British citizen could go in the reasonable expectation that here at any rate was something in which current politics were not involved—for the Chinese classic theater was surely something that had existed before Mao Tse-tung was ever heard of. But the innocent theatergoer was not destined to escape so easily. In the printed program he received an invitation to join the Britain-China Friendship Association—the Communist front organization in Britain devoted to the glorification of the Communist regime in China. The glamor of an ancient and exotic beauty was thus being employed to arouse interest in the country of its origin and direct this interest into certain political channels. Such are the uses of "culture" in international relations.

If, however, our imaginary British citizen in the theater is of a speculative turn of mind, it may occur to him to wonder

whether there is any organization for spreading a knowledge of Britain in China to correspond with the activity of the Britain-China Friendship Association in his own country. Pondering this question after leaving the theater, he would soon afterwards notice one of the many posters which advertise to the British public the fortnightly periodical *News*, published in Moscow in the English language and putting across Soviet propaganda in an idiom which has led some people to suspect that it is edited by the missing British diplomats Burgess and Maclean. "Why rely on hearsay," asks the poster, "when you can read the Soviet view on world affairs in *News*?" Why indeed? The fair-minded British citizen is surely anxious to get an authoritative exposition of the Soviet point of view; it may be, he reflects, that he has not had sufficient understanding of it hitherto. But again, he cannot help wondering, what about explanations in the reverse direction? Is there a comparable magazine in the Soviet Union for putting the British point of view to the Russian people, and are posters advertising it in all the stations of the Moscow underground?

If the puzzled Briton is not well informed on these matters, he can at any rate gain some idea of the Soviet attitude on the ques-

tion of reciprocity by buying an evening newspaper in which he will read of a protest to the British Broadcasting Corporation made through the Soviet embassy by the manager of a Russian football team visiting England. The Russian team had asked for a line to broadcast back to Russia from Britain a Russian commentary on a match—a concession which had been made to them on previous occasions—but this time the BBC had refused to make the line available unless Moscow undertook to cease jamming British commentaries in Russian on Russo-British matches. This outrageous action of the British radio authority in declining any longer to allow the Soviet Union to hold a monopoly of unjammed broadcasting to Russia from British soil was the cause of the diplomatic protest mentioned above.

WHEREVER one turns in the field of what are now commonly known as "East-West contacts," the picture is the same. Communist states exploit to the utmost all the opportunities of advertisement and propaganda provided by the freedom for publicity in the Western democracies, but there are no open channels of communication the other way. The Soviet or Chinese Communist "point of view" and claims of achievement can be presented to the Western public either by the information agencies of the Communist governments themselves or by Communists and fellow-travelers within each Western country, but the West is permitted no means of correcting the hostile versions of its policies and acts propagated by the states of the Soviet bloc among their own peoples. Outside a narrow range of military and diplomatic secrets, representatives of the Communist world are free to gather as much political, economic, and sociological information as they please in Western countries, but virtually insuperable obstacles are placed in the way of Western observers trying to obtain similar knowledge of countries under Communist rule.

The conception of an equal reciprocity of exchange of ideas, news, and information between the peoples of the two "camps" is

indeed entirely alien to the Communist way of thinking, and it should not have surprised anyone that the talks on East-West contacts which formed part of the proceedings of the foreign ministers at Geneva in accordance with the directive from the "summit" failed, in the words of a Western spokesman, to "agree on a single thing of any consequence whatsoever." All proposals from the Western side for relaxation of censorship, cessation of jamming of foreign broadcasts, or greater freedom of unescorted travel were met with the contention that these were internal matters that could not be subjects for international negotiation. It was made clear that in spite of all the talk about the Geneva spirit and the "new course" of Soviet policy, the Soviet attitude remained no less uncompromising over the maintenance of the Iron Curtain than over refusal to allow free elections in Germany, and that the existing system of insulation of the Communist world was to be continued without any significant modification.

For two reasons, however, the present time appears to be a suitable occasion for stock-taking with regard to the over-all situation in "East-West contacts." In the first place, now that the free world is being deluged by a propaganda of unprecedented pervasiveness for "relaxation of international tension" and other question-begging objectives, it is more than ever necessary to call the attention of the public in Western countries to the working of the Iron Curtain system and the dangerous illusions which it can create. Secondly, there is a need to consider in the light of recent experience the methods by which, in spite of all the difficulties involved, it is possible to some extent for the West to speak to the peoples behind the Curtain.

The Iron Curtain system has two inter-related purposes: to keep the peoples under Communist rule from contamination by any influence from the free world and to conceal from foreign observers any facts which it is thought undesirable for them to know. The former consideration is the more important of the two. The political order of Communism requires a thoroughgoing control over

the minds of those who are subjected to it, and in order that the party-state's monopoly of education, information, and news may be fully effective, all dissenting criticism or comment must be eliminated; to this end it is essential that the people be sealed off as far as possible from contacts with foreigners, for it would be of little use to suppress all internal opposition if unauthorized thoughts could obtain entry from abroad.

There are plenty of historical precedents for such an attempt on the part of a government to maintain an orthodox ideology and preserve an established authoritarian order by restricting a people's contacts with foreigners, or even excluding them altogether from the national territory, and it is not entirely accidental that two of the outstanding precedents—those of Russia before Peter the Great and China before the Nanking Treaty of 1842—are provided by the two countries which are now the main constituents of the Communist world. In both cases fear of the propagation of an alien religion was the main factor in the policy of keeping foreigners out of the country and hedging them in with all kinds of restrictions in any places which by way of exception they were allowed to visit.

The seclusion which in those days protected the Russian and Chinese peoples from being led astray by pernicious influences from Western Europe also served to prevent foreigners from knowing too much about the respective countries, and so was thought to give them additional security against attack. But on one all-important point these examples of old-fashioned national seclusion provide no parallel to the contemporary Iron Curtain system. Russia in the 17th century, China and Japan in the 18th, Tibet in the 19th sought to keep to themselves, to avoid international intercourse, and to reduce to a minimum the influx of commodities, persons, or ideas across their frontiers. But they did not at the same time try to spread their own ideological and political influence over the rest of the world. What differentiates the Communist regimes of our time is that they endeavor simul-

taneously to seclude their own peoples and to penetrate with subversive intent the political entities of nations that are beyond their borders.

If the Communists would only stay behind their Iron Curtain and refrain from interfering in the affairs of the free world, the West might disapprove of such unsociability, but would be content to accept it as a genuine form of "peaceful co-existence." But the Marxist-Leninists, prophets of a universal militant faith and promoters of a worldwide historical process supposed to be predetermined by inexorable fate, cannot confine themselves to the lands they already govern; their concern is with all mankind, and their resolve to play a part in all the affairs of our planet from the North Pole to the South is no less keen than their determination to seal off the peoples under their rule from communication with the realms of the heretic and the infidel.

THE desire of the Communist states to exert influence beyond the territorial boundaries of their bloc does indeed to some extent conflict with the ideal of a perfect seclusion which could in theory best be obtained by refraining from intercourse of any kind with the outside world. An active policy towards non-Communist nations involves learning foreign languages, making studies of foreign countries, sending representatives abroad, and developing certain kinds of foreign contacts. In practice, however, these contacts do very little to modify the general isolation of Communist-governed peoples from the outer world. Persons assigned to missions abroad are very carefully selected from the most indoctrinated and politically tested cadres of the party, and if they do not belong to this category—as with scholars and scientists sent to attend international conferences—they travel in teams under careful supervision so that private conversation with foreigners is almost impossible for them. Nobody can travel abroad on his own initiative and nobody who is sent abroad can publish anything about his experience without official approval, or even talk freely about it to his

friends without risk of denunciation and arrest. Thus, even if a sojourn abroad has decomposing effects on individuals—and it has, of course, produced defections such as those of Kravchenko, Gouzenko, and Petrov—it has little chance of conveying to the general home public any impressions which might serve to modify those that stem from official school-teaching and propaganda about the West.

The foreign visitor to Communist countries offers a more serious problem to the authorities. Foreigners behind the Iron Curtain may be divided into three categories: first, the permanent or semi-permanent residents—diplomats, newspaper correspondents, and business representatives; secondly, conducted parties and delegations; and thirdly, solitary travelers. It is the visitors in the second category who are to be encouraged; all their contacts are collective and can easily be supervised and they do not stay in the country long enough to be dangerous, either as centers of ideological infection or as gatherers of information. Persons in the first category are potentially the most dangerous, but their numbers can be kept low and the longer they remain in the country the more the secret police can take the measure of their characters and activities.

The transient visitor who declines to be conducted is perhaps the greatest nuisance to the authorities, as it is difficult to know whether he is worth watching or not. The simplest method of coping with inquisitive foreigners is to forbid them access to large areas of the country and prohibit any journey without special permission; at one time such restrictions were applied in the Soviet Union even to diplomats, who had to have a permit to go more than twenty miles from Moscow. Recently there has been a relaxation of the extreme rigor of former practice, but various kinds of obstructions to residence or travel remain—above all, the artificial exchange rate of the rouble which makes un-conducted touring in the Soviet Union a pastime only for the very rich or liberally subsidized.

Even so, the greatest difficulty for the

foreigner in making contacts with the inhabitants of a Communist-ruled country lies not in any direct administrative restrictions on his entry into, or movement within, the country but in the attitude of a people whose habits of discourse have been formed by years of totalitarian police control. Refugees from Russia have testified that any man who talks freely on public affairs in the presence of strangers is regarded as a fool who is likely soon to meet with the fate he deserves, much as in the West people regard a man who habitually tries to walk across streets through fast traffic without looking where he is going.

It is not, indeed, only in Communist countries that the citizen becomes wary of political talk; in Germany under Hitler there used to be a proverbial prayer, "O God, make me dumb and keep me out of Dachau!" But nearly four decades of Cheka, GPU, NKVD, and MVD have made this attitude more instinctive in Russia than it has perhaps ever been under any other regime in history, and the new Communist countries are not far behind in their discipline of speech. To any question asked by a stranger which might have even the most remote bearing on public affairs, the prudent citizen of a Communist state answers either by saying that he knows nothing about it, or by echoing the most recent official pronouncement on the subject, or—if he is greatly daring—by an invention which he thinks would do no harm if recorded at police headquarters.

It is a mistake to suppose that such caution is habitual only with fellow citizens; it is required just as much with a foreigner, for if he speaks the language, he may be an *agent provocateur* and if he talks through an interpreter, the latter is probably a police informer. In any case the meeting is likely to have been observed and anything that is printed later may be traced to its source.

IT MAY seem superfluous to emphasize this consequence of totalitarian power, yet anyone who is familiar with the output of books, articles, and newspaper interviews by journalists and travelers returning from

Russia or China cannot fail to be struck by the frequency with which they repeat uncritically what they have been told, especially if they have ever talked to anyone who was not a high official.

A newspaper correspondent who has spent a fortnight in China, and is by no means favorably impressed by everything he saw, nevertheless asserts that the population is solidly behind the regime; at least he did not meet anyone who said he was not. A member of a trade union delegation to Russia solemnly denies that there are any forced-labor camps there; he knows because he asked a man at random in the street, and the citizen thus questioned merely laughed and said he had never heard of anything of the kind. An experienced journalist who is regarded as one of the leading authorities on Russia quotes a favorable opinion about Khrushchev, introducing it with, "I asked a Russian who knows about such things."

It is hard to overestimate the psychological effect of unanimity in lulling the critical faculty and laying a hypnotic spell on a mind even of the highest intelligence. A totalitarian government which has once accustomed its subjects to orthodoxy in speech can use its entire population to reinforce its propaganda, however widespread may be the subterranean discontent.

On balance, therefore, contacts of foreign visitors with peoples behind the Iron Curtain under conditions created by secret police control tend to operate as a one-way traffic to the disadvantage of the free world; there is hardly any opportunity for the foreigner to exert influence, but he often becomes unconsciously a vehicle for Communist propaganda, which acquires for him the status of fact because it seems to be everywhere corroborated and there is nobody who dares to contradict it. It is quite easy for originally rational Western observers to be "brain-washed" in Russia or China without ever being put behind prison bars.

It must be recognized, therefore, that in a contest of propaganda the Communist states have a double advantage, for they can not only use the freedoms of the Western democ-

racies to operate in various ways on Western opinion, but they can also use the unreal unanimity which they produce in their own countries to baffle and mislead those representatives of the West who pass through the Iron Curtain and are assumed to acquire a knowledge of the Communist world which cannot be obtained at a distance. What then is there to set on the other side of the balance sheet? Virtually nothing except radio broadcasts and leaflet balloons. But, however meager are these means of communication in comparison with the facilities for propaganda enjoyed by the enemies of the free world, they are nevertheless not to be despised, for the very success of the Communists in isolating the peoples under their control makes each word that breaks the hypnotic unanimity many times more effective than it could ever be in an environment of free speech. The importance which the Communists themselves attach to Western broadcasts is shown by the immense trouble they have taken in jamming them, and it is known that the leaflet balloons have been a cause of endless headaches to the Czech security police.

INDEED, it can be argued that one of the main reasons for the Soviet gestures of conciliation earlier this year—which have now been shown to have been empty of any intention to compromise on any objectives of policy—was the alarm felt at the growing energy of Western political warfare and the desire to weaken the Western will to carry it on. The "Geneva spirit" period has certainly had this effect; the planning of political counter-attacks on the Soviet bloc has been half-paralyzed by the argument that "we must say nothing that might spoil the chances of agreement." Nor has even the latest Molotov performance at the conference of foreign ministers convinced the earnest hoppers that the time has come to stop pulling punches in the cold war; a headline in the British press consoles the public for failure at Geneva in 1955 with "Hopes of Geneva Talks in 1956" and the *Daily Worker* tells us confidently that the

Republican administration in Washington dare not now take a strong line in international policy because of its fear of getting on the wrong side of the American electorate in next year's Presidential election.

The danger now is that the Western powers will allow matters to drift and try to avoid any heightening of tension, while the Russians steadily undermine the West German will to resist by dangling in front of German eyes the prospect of national reunification on Communist terms. That the Soviet government expects the Western powers and the German Federal Republic ultimately to capitulate to the demand for negotiation with the Pankow puppets was made clear in Molotov's speech at Geneva on his return from Moscow—perhaps the most arrogant he has ever made in his whole career as foreign minister. He obviously thinks that time is on the Soviet side in Germany, and so it is if the West remains passive and undecided.

But the tables can be turned if the West is determined to make full use of its political opportunities. By rejecting the principle of German self-determination through free elections and insisting that their *protégés* should be accorded a position of privilege that they could never gain from a popular vote, Soviet diplomacy has at once offered a direct challenge to the German nation and placed in the hands of the West a most powerful weapon of political warfare. In the months

ahead everything will depend on the use that is made of this weapon. The next phase of the cold war will be above all a struggle for the heart and mind of Germany, including East Germany, and it will be essential for Bonn and the whole free world to speak across the boundary to the inhabitants of Grotewohl's prison. This will be a test case.

IN THE negotiations at Geneva, Russia has made it clear beyond the shadow of doubt that the system of Communist monopoly of information and opinion is to be maintained in the countries of the Soviet bloc, and that "East-West contacts" are intended on the Soviet side to be, as before, a one-way traffic of the mind. But the West cannot and should not acquiesce. It cannot renounce the right to speak in any way it can to the peoples behind the Iron Curtain, to plead its cause with them against the ceaseless campaign of slander and incitement by which the Communists have divided mankind.

This task should be regarded by Western statesmen as one of the highest importance for which no supplies of money or brains should be stinted; the objective must be to break through the Iron Curtain by whatever technical means are available short of military action. The free world must assert the right to be heard in its own defense by the peoples who have been isolated by their rulers from the rest of mankind, and it must find ways of making itself heard.

"Reducing International Tension"

PAUL KECSKEMETI

IT IS interesting to notice how the language of politics changes. When people nowadays talk about "international tension" and the need for "reducing" it, they use these words in a sense different from that current before the First World War. At that time, the word "tension" usually referred to a state of acute and dangerous irritation over some specific issue. When a state of tension was noted, it meant, more

often than not, that the question of war or peace was raised in acute form. For example, one power made moves to establish itself in an area where another had vested interests. As the former was pushing its plans, the latter threatened to hinder them by force if necessary. The question was then whether the controversy could be settled by compromise before either power did something that made war inevitable.

Tension of this sort, when it became acute, called for immediate action and regularly touched off intense diplomatic activity. There were feverish consultations behind closed doors, and at the same time threatening gestures, naval demonstrations, and clamor in the streets. It was a race against time, for war could not be avoided once the prestige of any power was irrevocably committed. Such acute tension could not last long. Either it was speedily resolved, or it erupted into war.

It is clear that the "tension" being discussed in our own day is not of this acute sort. It is *chronic* tension, but of great intensity, so great, in fact, that it is called "cold war." How does such chronic tension compare with the violent, dangerous, and transitory periods of acute tensions before 1914?

For one thing, chronic tension of the cold war type expresses a deeper, more total antagonism than the older type of acute tension ever did. In acute tension, one power objected to what another was doing or was about to do in some disputed area—as when France pushed into the Sudan in 1898, or prepared to set up a protectorate in Morocco in 1905, or when the Austro-Hungarian monarchy insisted upon punitive measures against Serbia in 1914. Acute controversies of this sort may usually have been symptoms of some deep-seated chronic antagonism, but never of total mutual rejection. This, however, is what characterizes our present chronic tension. The opposing powers not only have conflicting interests; they stand for antithetical basic principles. One power objects not only to what the other *does* but also to what it *is*. The existence of the one is viewed as offering a total challenge to the other.

One might assume, therefore, that chronic tension of the cold war type points to total war as its logical consummation, unlike acute tension which leaves room for compromise and threatens limited conflict at most. Paradoxically, however, the acute tension of 1914 did result in total war, while our present chronic tension has involved a kind of enduring equilibrium between the United

States and the Soviet Union. Thus, while such tension is deeper and more fundamental than international tension used to be, it is less dynamic in its direct manifestations and can persist without explosive consequences.

IN TRYING to explain this paradox, we have to remember that a power is readier to start a war when expecting it to remain limited than when sure beforehand that it will be total. Before 1914 the rules of international relations prescribed war under certain circumstances: once "irreparable" things had happened (e.g. once a power decreed general mobilization), all mediation was considered useless. Presumably, the rules of international conduct would have been different if people had then known how destructive modern war could be. But the point is that they did not know. Pre-1914 Europe, it seems, was betrayed into a kind of fatalistic light-heartedness about war because all European wars since Napoleon (the Crimean, Franco-Austrian, Austro-Prussian, and Franco-Prussian) had been short and far from ruinous for the participants, including the losers. In 1914, both government and public in all the European countries involved expected a short war: a long conflict was considered "unthinkable" because it unavoidably meant total ruin. As it turned out, however, war had a mechanism of its own. Once it got under way it could not be stopped short of the total exhaustion of one side or the other.

By 1918 most people had been thoroughly disabused of the idea that war under modern conditions could be a normal regulator of international affairs, an *ultima ratio* that could be resorted to without courting disaster. But the tragedy was that the democratic West drew wishful conclusions from this sobering thought: since war had turned out to be irrational, one could act as if it had become an impossibility. This set the stage for World War II. With the West disarmed, Hitler thought that a return to the old pre-1914 pattern of the short, relatively painless, and victorious war was possible. He started war over a local issue; it became a general

conflict and, again, ran its course until one side—again the German—was totally prostrate.

With the advent of atomic weapons, the last excuse for such a wishful illusion as Hitler labored under when he attacked Poland has evaporated. It has become all too plain that a war between great powers must now be a totally destructive one. But at the same time political antagonisms have arisen between the great powers of the postwar world that are unprecedentedly radical in their nature. This has done away with the other illusion, namely, that the very irrationality of war would render it an impossibility.

But what are we left with after shedding both these illusions? Since unilateral disarmament is just as suicidal as resorting to arms, survival has become possible only in a state of tense, armed equilibrium. We face an opponent intent upon changing the face of the world; if he has his way, we are doomed. Nevertheless, it does not follow that we must fight him. It is enough to make sure that he *cannot* have his way. If we have enough ready military potential, he will be deterred from aggression. Our military potential is not meant for use, but for insurance.

This is the formula of chronic tension. Unlike acute tension, which represents a dangerous disturbance of the existing state of equilibrium, chronic tension serves to maintain equilibrium. It is a kind of adjustment to a totally threatening situation.

BUT the question is, how well can this kind of adjustment work in the long run? Can peace and security be preserved indefinitely on such a basis?

Theoretically, the mechanism of chronic tension works in the following way: one power seeks to upset the status quo and another is determined to prevent this. While they pursue diametrically opposed aims, each knows that overt conflict would be ruinous. Hence, as long as one power can convince the other that any attempt to change the status quo by force would be

met by force, the status quo will be respected.

How well the status quo can be preserved on such terms depends on two crucial conditions: first, that the more aggressive power prefer the status quo to overt conflict; second, that no change be brought about without overt conflict. When the first condition no longer holds good, the equilibrium breaks down, tension becomes acute, and the less aggressive power must either yield or go to war. When the second condition goes unsatisfied, the more "dynamic" power will attack the status quo by means short of war or by purely local military action with which the defender of the status quo will not interfere.

Now the second rather than the first condition represents the weak point of the cold war arrangement, since it is much more difficult to satisfy than the first. With modern arms being what they are, it is not too difficult to deter an aggressive power from doing things which could only result in all-out war. But this category of offenses is limited. There are plenty of changes that a resolutely aggressive power can bring about by means short of war or by local, peripheral operations. In chronic tension, when all-out conflict is ruled out, the policies of the aggressive side will be increasingly concentrated upon gains that it can achieve without employing the bulk of its armed forces.

This puts the defending side in an increasingly uncomfortable and precarious position. Its prime political weapon is the threat of massive armed retaliation, but this threat cannot be effective where the conflict seems too circumscribed to justify its being carried out. In this way the status quo can be gradually undermined. It is essential for the defending side to halt the undermining, but this requires instruments other than the threat of massive retaliation.

Another difficulty the defender faces in a situation of chronic tension like the cold war is psychological. The attacker need not talk about war explicitly until he is good and ready for it; until then he can profess absolute and unconditional pacifism. The de-

fender, however, must constantly maintain that he cannot, and will not, keep the peace if certain things happen. While many people understand that these conditional threats of war imply no actual intention of fighting—just as the aggressor's protestations of his hatred of war do not exclude such an intention on his part—it is all too easy to confuse explicit references to war as a *possibility* with a *really* warlike attitude. The formula intended for deterrent effect, which tries to exclude the *actuality* of war by asserting its *possibility*, is far too subtle for most people to grasp. As soon as they hear a reference to war as a possibility under certain circumstances, they jump to the conclusion that the speaker has actual war in mind, and they imagine atomic bombs being dropped everywhere.

Such reactions are fairly widespread, particularly among European intellectuals and opinion-makers. Instead of criticizing the *real* weaknesses inherent in the deterrent policy, they meet it with lofty moral condemnation. Including the possibility of war in one's political calculations, if only as something to avoid, is, according to them, the arch-crime, the first step towards perdition. Salvation can lie only in envisaging no alternative whatsoever to peace.

THE prevalence of such an attitude explains the success of the cry for "reducing tension." Instead of threatening each other with retribution in case of attack, it is said, let the opponents assure each other of their heartfelt desire to avoid conflict. This will clear the air and lead in time to the abatement of chronic tension itself. In fact, the *détente* is already with us today; the cold war is a thing of the past, consigned to limbo by the Spirit of Geneva. Admittedly, none of the political differences between East and West has been resolved, but is this really important? Now there is a school of thought, popular in the United States and indeed in the whole Western world, which holds that political issues are, after all, only secondary. Human feelings of friendliness and hostility are the things that really count, and such

feelings can be shaped and manipulated by public-relations techniques. If we cultivate the Spirit of Geneva and multiply cordial get-togethers between representatives of East and West, politics will follow suit.

Now we may readily admit that the introduction of a more urbane tone and demeanor into international intercourse is a desirable thing. But it is courting catastrophe to believe that the underlying political tension itself is bound to be relaxed once it is made clear that neither side really wants to fight. After all, it was plain even at the height of the cold war that both we and the Russians were anxious not to go to war; the desire for peace is an essential feature of chronic tension as such. But to make this explicit does not change the situation. The issues that have been controversial remain controversial; the determination to handle these issues by methods short of war, however, is no dramatic new departure—it has existed all along. What is new is mainly that the side which refuses to yield gracefully can now be accused of sinning against the Spirit of Geneva. The *détente* has not put an end to the political tug-of-war between East and West. It has merely introduced a new technique of political warfare. "Reducing tension" has become a new counter in the game, and one that the Russians are using with considerable astuteness.

The Spirit of Geneva lends itself well to the promotion of the Russians' immediate objective, which is the dismantling of the Western defensive alliance. Why keep such an alliance in being if everybody agrees that no attack is to be feared? As long as the world remains divided into "hostile blocs" we shall have tension, strife, the danger of war. If we want to do away with tension, we must get rid of the blocs; the Spirit of Geneva cannot tolerate alliances explicitly directed against any one power, or group of powers, that is designated as a prospective aggressor.

It would be wonderful if tension could be eliminated by such simple means, but would the dismantling of the Western alliance really eliminate tension, or even significantly

reduce it? Let us look at the probable consequences of such a move. It would, first and foremost, weaken those forces which tend to defend the status quo and strengthen those which favor the expansion of the Soviet bloc. In a world without "hostile blocs," acceptance of changes brought about by force rather than the cowing of would-be aggressors would become dominant.

The advent of such an era of uninhibited dynamism would certainly be welcome from the Communist point of view, but it would be disastrous for the West. And whether or not such unbridled "dynamism" would provoke a major war, one thing is certain: it would not reduce tension. Tension as such declines only if the situation becomes more acceptable to everybody concerned. If it becomes more satisfactory to one side and less satisfactory to the other, then it is their relative power position that changes, rather than the fact that tension prevails between them. In fact, such one-sided changes are likely to result either in increased tension and eventual conflict, or in the complete collapse of the power against whose interests they tend to harm.

If we dispense with conditional threats and absolutely exclude any alternative other than complete non-interference, we do not reduce tension; we merely enable our adversary to undermine our position to such an extent that in the end our only choice will be between a suicidal conflict and an equally suicidal surrender. This does not mean that our present policy of conditional threats is adequate. We must recognize that our position can be quite effectively undermined by

action against which the conditional threats of nuclear devastation are of no avail. The problem this poses for us is far from being solved; it is not even sufficiently understood.

How to deal with this difficulty is, however, outside the scope of the present article. We are concerned here only with the problem of reducing international tension. So far we have pointed out only how chronic tension could not be reduced. We have seen that neither the protestation of peaceful intentions nor the abandonment of conditional threats and defensive preparations is a suitable means for eliminating or even substantially lessening tension. But what other means could one recommend then? Or is it best not to try to reduce chronic tension at all, and trust that it will continue to preserve stability without a conflict?

The answer is that chronic international tension can neither be maintained nor reduced by design. The extent and degree of such tension is not an independent datum that one can control by direct methods. It is what results when interests and wills are at odds. Tension may abate when interests and aims change, but this is not a matter of free choice. We have some choice as to the way in which we pursue our goals and interests, but not as to what these goals and interests are. And the existence and the degree of chronic tension are determined by ends rather than by means. If conflict of goals and interests leads to tension, it makes little difference whether we like the fact or not; we cannot make it vanish by incantation. It is not the desire to get rid of tension that causes it to be reduced.